

Judge Orders Temporary Halt to \$4B Federal Loan Relief Program for Farmers of Color

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Wisconsin: Federal Judge William Griesbach ordered a temporary halt to a \$4 billion federal loan relief program for 'socially disadvantaged' farmers of color that excluded white farmers. Twelve white farmers across nine states who filed the suit argued the policy discriminates against them. The judge said that the white farmers "are likely to succeed on the merits of their claim" that the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) "use of race-based criteria in the administration of the program violates their right to equal protection under the law." He issued a temporary restraining order blocking the USDA from proceeding with the loan relief payments. He wrote that Congress cannot discriminate on the basis of race.

A federal judge in Wisconsin has ordered a temporary halt to a \$4 billion federal loan relief program aimed at addressing longstanding inequities for farmers of color after a legal challenge by white farmers who argue the policy **discriminates against them**.

Judge William Griesbach found in an order issued Thursday that the white farmers "are likely to succeed on the merits of their claim" that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "use of race-based criteria in the administration of the program violates their right to equal protection under the law."

He issued a temporary restraining order blocking the Department of Agriculture from proceeding with the loan relief payments.

A department spokesman, Matt Herrick, told NBC News, "We respectfully disagree with this temporary order and USDA will continue to forcefully defend our ability to carry out this act of Congress and deliver debt relief to socially disadvantaged borrowers. When the temporary order is lifted, USDA will be prepared to provide the debt relief authorized by Congress."

The plaintiffs in the case, 12 farmers from nine states, had filed suit against the USDA over the roughly **\$4 billion set aside** for loan forgiveness for “socially disadvantaged” farmers and ranchers in the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan **signed by President Joe Biden** in March.

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